

## William Hawthorne's Autograph Book

"Roses are red; Violets are blue; sugar is sweet; and so are you," or something as trite as that, was what many little boys or girls wrote in the autograph book of a classmate or neighbor during their childhood. While I attended Enterprise School, a few of the girls would have an autograph book that they would ask us to sign. I purchased a little booklet from a book sale while attending that school that contained many similar poems that could be written into an autograph book. Not being very creative, I needed all of the help that I could get.

Autograph books, according to wikipedia.com, "(also known as an autograph album, a memory album or friendship album) is a book for collecting the autographs of others. Traditionally they were exchanged among friends, colleagues, and classmates to fill with poems, drawings, personal messages, small pieces of verse, and other mementos. Their modern derivations include yearbooks, friendship books, and guest books. They were popular among university students from the 15th century until the mid-19th century, after which their popularity began to wane as they were gradually replaced by yearbooks." Many of you may have seen them in the possession of a parent or other older relative.

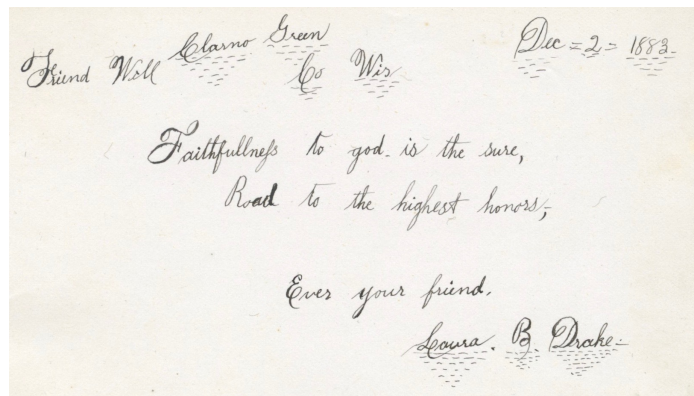
A friend, who knows of my interest in local history and my connection to Clarno Township, gave me an old autograph book a couple years ago. I have no idea where he got it. It turned out that it wasn't just any ordinary autograph album, but was given to the third great grandfather of my late brother's only grandson. William Hawthorne (1865 - 1932) received the book on November 4, 1883. So often autograph books have signatures and meaningless ditties written in them, but William got meaningful messages from many members of his family during the next few years. Because of the many family autographs, in my opinion, this book becomes much more of a family heirloom than those books that have signatures of people that the family would no longer know.

Even though many pages in the book were left blank, the writings that he collected are fabulous. His father, Andrew J. (1837 - 1909), wrote on August 1, 1887, "The pathway of life is strewed with many disappointments and discouragements and dark clouds seem to hover around us but we must not get discouraged it will only make matters worse try again we must put our trust in God the prize lies at the end of the race there will be no disappointments there. When you are far away and this you read remember the old folks at home" This might have been written by a man who didn't even have an eighth grade education. William didn't move "far away," but rather from Clarno to Cadiz township and then to Monroe in 1918, which is where he died.

His mother, Abbie M. (1842 - 1910), wrote on June 30, 1887, "A holy life spent in the service of God and in communion with him is without doubt the most pleasant and comfortable life that any man can like in this world. May you live this life is the prayer of your loving mother."

His brother, Edwin E. (1867 - 1898), signed the book twice, once near the front of the book on February 12, 1884 and the second time on April 18, 1887 near the back of the book. His signature for both was E E Hawthorne. I did not find an autograph from his brother, Ray, but I would guess that one of his most treasured signatures was from his sister, Cora, who signed the book on November 10, 1883 at the age of 21. Unfortunately, she passed away the following year. Her message started with a verse of 16-lines and ended with, "May the blessings of prosperity and happiness follow you to the end of life, is the wish of your sister."

Most of the signatures were from people who lived in Clarno and Cadiz Townships, but one was from Fairfield in Jefferson Township. There was also one signature each from Beloit and Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. The latest signature that I saw was from Mary Bryan of Sioux City, Iowa on August 30, 1901.



This signature from Laura Drake was written in the autograph book that was given to William Hawthorne on November 4, 1883. William collected signatures that included many relatives, which make the book collectible for family members. Notice how the last two letters in the word 'faithfulness' were written, the way it was done at the time.

She simply signed, "Remember your cousin." Even though most of what I shared here was about the immediate family autographs, some were from other cousins and many from friends nearby.

I'm not sure if there is any monetary value to these autograph books that don't have the autographs of a famous person, but I do know that, if this was mine and included my family, I would treasure it for the rest of my life!